

THE ANGEL OF PEACE

and mind, but exulting in the new gift of writing which she believed she had miraculously acquired. "Thou hast written to me," she writes to Alessa, "that it seemed that God was compelling thee to offer up prayers to Him for me. Thanks be to the Divine Goodness which shows such ineffable love to my miserable soul. Thou tellest me to write thee if I am suffering, and if I have my usual infirmities at this time ; to which I answer that God has provided wondrously, within and without. In the body He has done much for me this Advent, making me relieve my sufferings by writing ; and it is true that, through His goodness, they have been worse than they used to be. I wish suffering to be my food, tears my drink, sweat my ointment. I wish suffering to make me fat, suffering to heal me, suffering to ^ive me light, suffering to give me wisdom, suffering to clothe my nakedness, suffering to strip me of all love of self, spiritual ind temporal. What I have suffered in being deprived of the :onsolations of all creatures has made me know my lack of virtue and my own imperfection, and the most perfect light of ;he sweet Truth, who provides and accepts holy desires and not :reatures; He has not withdrawn His goodness from me because of my ingratitude, my little light and knowledge ; but He has only looked upon Himself, who is supremely good. I Deseech thee, by the love of Jesus Christ crucified, most beloved laughter mine, not to slacken prayer; nay, redouble it, for I lave greater need of it than thou seest; and to thank the goodness of God for me. And pray to Him that He may give ne grace to give my life for Him."¹

About the beginning of the new year, 1378, Catherine seems o have returned to Siena. But her stay there was again of brief luration. Hardly had she arrived when she received a papal .ommand, through Fra Raimondo, to go at once to Florence.

¹ Letter 119 (178). For her learning to write at this time, see below, hapter xvi.